



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

FATHER EDMOND JOHN PETER SCHMITT.

I. J. COX.

The subject of this sketch, the Reverend Father Edmond John Peter Schmitt, the son of Peter and Magdalen (Mouth) Schmitt, was born at New Albany, Indiana, March the 16th, 1865, and died at San Antonio, Texas, May the 5th, 1901. In his comparatively short career of thirty-six years he has left a sufficiently strong impress upon the religious and intellectual life of his native State and of our own, to warrant a review of some of its leading features in the pages of *THE QUARTERLY*.

The events of his early life may briefly be summarized. At the age of five, he entered the parochial schools of his native town, where by his modest diligence, he soon became a favorite pupil. At fourteen, forced by pecuniary losses of his father to enter active business, he still continued his studies privately and began to collect a library. When he passed his eighteenth birthday, having assisted in relieving his father's financial embarrassments, he entered the college of St. Meinard to prepare himself for his chosen career, the priesthood. This latter step was not taken without strenuous opposition from his father, who feared the rigors of a devoted priest's life would prove too much for his delicate son. But the prattled desire of the boy of eight had strengthened into the firm purpose of serious youth, and that purpose was not to be gainsaid.

Such had been the careful self-instruction of the young student, and such was his industry that he was able to complete the regular five years' course in two, and at the close of this short period he found himself considering the special field for his life work. A short trial as a novice of the order of Benedictines, at St. Meinard, convinced him that his particular field should be the secular priesthood. He then entered the seminary of St. Meinard, and applied himself, with his usual diligence, to the regular course in philosophy and theology. During this period began his historical labors, of which the published results did not cease until death itself ended them.

Ordained in 1890 by the Bishop of Indianapolis, the Right Reverend F. S. Chatard, a week later he offered his first mass in the

church of St. Mary's at New Albany—the church in which he was baptized and in which, later, was sung his own last high mass. Shortly after, he was placed in charge of the parish of St. John, in Warrick county, Indiana, with several other small mission churches under his direct supervision. Then followed five years of active and energetic pastoral work, supplemented by a constantly increasing amount of literary production, generally of a historical character.

His increasing labors, especially in connection with the erection of a noble church edifice for his rural parish, proved too much for a physical constitution never any too strong for the tasks imposed upon it. In 1895, he suffered severe hemorrhages and came South to seek renewed health in Texas. After a few months' sojourn, the desire to be again at work drew him back to Indiana. He was given the chaplaincy of an orphanage. Soon his condition grew much worse, but rallying a little, he returned to Texas, where, in San Antonio, for five years longer he carried on with his grim enemy a losing but determined fight.

In such a life as his there was much that was inexpressibly sad, and yet, much that was charming, for his was an attractive personality. A loyal and devoted priest, he was no ascetic; a man of exact and mature scholarship, he was no mere cut-and-dried specialist. Passionately devoted to the ceremonies and observances of the Church he served, he never lost sight of human interest in narrow formalism. Loving historical research next to the services of his Church, he brought to this field of labor an accurate and discriminating scientific spirit, freshened by an intimate acquaintance with what most men designate as "hobbies." Although these latter always occupied a secondary position in his busy life, yet, in many cases, as in his collections of curios and coins, in his various scrap and stamp albums, etc., they were of themselves of great value.

Father Schmitt was a man of wide human sympathies. He delighted in social intercourse, in which his many-sided genius, supplemented by careful reading, had fitted him to take a prominent part. His musical and artistic tastes were apparent in many ways, aside from a special fondness for the liturgy of his Church. He was a charming conversationalist, and a ready debater as well, but he never allowed the latter quality to detract from the charming urbanity that his friends so prized in him.

Of what we may call his minor passions that of ransacking book stores and libraries was easily the chief. His knowledge of books bearing upon any ordinary historical subject was really remarkable. Doubtless, he never entered a library without leaving behind a suggestion that caused his visit to be remembered. He was especially interested in the acquisition by libraries of books that were "worth while," and in the diffusion of knowledge concerning them.

Father Schmitt was more than generous to a fault; with him, it was a failing. The worthy and unworthy were alike helped by him, lest, in refusing any, some needy one should suffer. It was no uncommon thing for him to give away "not merely his coat, but his cloak also," and his relatives or friends must rival him in generosity in order to prevent the entire depletion of the good father's wardrobe.

Toward his parents his love and loyalty were beautiful. To us who knew him in San Antonio his affection for his father and the latter's devotion to him were touching. At the close of his seminary course it became possible for him to go abroad for some years' study, either in the Tyrol, or at the Vatican in Rome. To a man of his historical tastes the opportunity seemed too good to be missed; but he chose to remain in this country, so as to be near his mother, then failing from the same disease that was later to attack him. Again, in 1895, he hastened from his pastoral duties to his dying mother's bedside, and very likely in the long watch beside her, contracted the germs of the fatal disease. His appreciation of family life was high, and nowhere better shown than in his tender filial devotion.

As a youth, Father Schmitt had been a frequent contributor to newspapers and periodicals. During his seminary course his efforts were turned into their life-long channel—the history of the pioneers of the Catholic faith in the United States. His first work of this character, published in Cincinnati, was *Lose Blätter aus der Geschichte der Deutschen St. Marien Gemeinde*, a history of German Catholic pioneer days in New Albany, Indiana, and vicinity. A little later there appeared from Vienna his *Bibliographia Benedictina*, a complete bibliography of that order in America. During his pastorate his attention was attracted to the early French mission of Vincennes, in his preparation of a life of Bishop Bruté, the first bishop of that section of our country. His work on this

biography was greatly interrupted, and he died leaving the volume still incomplete, but in such shape that another may easily finish it. He lived to see some results of his labor in this field, however, in the publication of the *Records of Vincennes*, in two installments, in the *Catholic Historical Magazine* for the present year. He also found time for occasional historical or religious contributions to periodicals, and for one or two evangelistic booklets. At this time he also assisted the Honorable W. H. English in the preparation of the latter's account of the life and campaigns of George Rogers Clarke. Thus he has aided materially in the important work of recording the history of the French and German pioneers of his native State.

In the midst of his busy life, he was suddenly called to another scene of labor. In a distant State and amid unfamiliar surroundings, his delicate health permitting no vigorous occupation, he found occasional opportunities for his chosen field of work, the history of his beloved church, from another point of view—the Spanish. The early work of the Franciscans in Texas aroused the same interest as that of the Benedictines or Jesuits in Indiana. The gloom of the daily struggle for life was lightened by the joy of assisting to exploit a virgin field of historical research. During the five years that preceded his death, he succeeded as no other student of our early history has done in making himself master of the enchanting details of the career of the Franciscans in Texas. When one considers the burden of ill-health under which he labored this statement is significant, and the amount of work turned out by him really marvelous.

His first article published in the *QUARTERLY* appeared in the number for October, 1897, and bore the title *Ven. Maria Jesus De Agreda: A Correction*. This was followed, in the number for January, 1898, by *Sieur Louis de Saint Denis*. Although contributing no more formal articles, his name frequently appeared in the magazine appended to some note or question. The most important of these appeared in the number for July, 1899, on *The Name Alamo*; his last in April, 1900, relating to the church of San Fernando. These contributions all show his careful and painstaking research, and his desire to assist the cause of exact scholarship. Father Schmitt was elected to a life membership in the Association a few months before his death.

His work for the *QUARTERLY* by no means exhausts his produc-

tions of this period. For the local chapter of the Daughters of the Republic he wrote *The Story of the Alamo*, a sketch of its history taken from records hitherto largely unused. The manuscript of this is now in possession of the organization, by whom it will shortly be published. A more ambitious work *A Catalogue of Franciscan Missionaries in Texas (1528-1859)*, published in April last, is an indispensable aid to the student of Texas history. Although as yet necessarily incomplete, it must form the basis for any future research in that field. His most important work for this period, however, was his collection of notes and maps on the various Franciscan missions of Texas. He had made a thorough study of parish and mission records, as preserved by the church authorities in San Antonio, and from these had made copious notes. In addition, he prepared a series of maps locating the missions, with plans of them, so far as was possible, from descriptions or extant drawings. His health did not permit him to travel in order to verify in person his data; nor, for this reason, was he able to examine the material in the Bexar Archives bearing upon his subject. Had his life been spared a few years longer, doubtless he would have been able to bring out an authoritative work on the early Texas missions. His notes and maps are now in the possession of Father Zephyrin Engelhardt, O. F. M., an author of note on the early missions of the order, by whom they doubtless will be well used.

While engaged in his study of the mission records he was able to formulate a very complete list of the various Indian tribes of the Southwest, from which the missions were recruited. The value of this list has been duly acknowledged by the authorities of the Bureau of Ethnology at Washington. Another auxiliary work in which he had made an important beginning was the preparation of a more elaborate and complete bibliography of Texas than has yet been attempted. For this purpose he was using, as a foundation, the work of Judge C. W. Raines, and greatly expanding it in many particulars. During this period he was a frequent contributor to the periodical press of this vicinity. Another important work, posthumously published, *A Collation of Kingsborough's Antiquities of Mexico*, is, like most of those mentioned above, intended for the scholar rather than the general reader.

Thus did our worthy friend occupy himself during the declining years of his life. Shut in from the busy world in which he would

only too gladly have taken his place, snatching occasional moments of partial strength for some task to benefit pure scholarship rather than to minister to the delight of the public, he did faithfully what he could in giving his true measure of devotion to the cause he loved. It is only fitting that those who knew of what he accomplished and sympathized with his aims and struggles should render him a modest tribute of love and appreciation.